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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 001366

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SUBJECT: MISUARI REPORTEDLY ORDERS CAPTURE OF JI MEMBERS ON
JOLO

Classified By: Pol/C Scott Bellard for reason 1.4 (d)

11. (C) Summary: The Armed Forces of the Philippines overran a Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) camp in Indanan during an April 25-26 assault on the Abu Sayyaf Group. Government security officials requested MNLF Chairman and Sulu gubernatorial candidate Nur Misuari to assert his leadership by ending the armed conflict on Jolo involving rogue MNLF Commander Habier Malik. Misuari reportedly agreed to cooperate, but will ask the government to drop the warrant for Malik's arrest. He also reportedly instructed the MNLF Sulu Revolutionary Command under Khaid Ajibon to capture Jemaah Islamiyah High Value Targets Dulmatin and Omar Patek. A Makati Regional Trial Court may decide on May 9 whether to release Misuari on bail. End Summary.

MNLF Camp Overrun

12. (U) On April 25-26, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) bombarded and then occupied a camp in Indanan that the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) "Sulu Revolutionary Command" under Khaid Ajibon had earlier vacated. AFP spokesman Lt. Col. Bartolome Bacano told the press that the AFP believed that members of the Abu Sayyaf Group were in the camp, but had managed to escape. Philippine Joint Special Operations Task Force Commander Brig-Gen. Ruperto Pabustan added that fugitive Jemaah Islamiyah High Value Targets Dulmatin and Omar Patek had previously been sighted in the camp.

Seeking Misuari's Cooperation

13. (C) According to MNLF attorney Ombra Jainal, Secretary of Interior and Local Government Ronaldo Puno and Special Action Force Superintendent Leo Santiago visited MNLF Chairman and Sulu gubernatorial candidate (for Puno's party, Kampi) Nur Misuari on April 27 to discuss the fighting on Jolo. During a meeting that lasted nearly four hours, Puno requested Misuari's cooperation in ending the armed conflict between rogue MNLF commander Habier Malik and government security forces, Jainal said. Puno admitted Misuari's role as the only MNLF leader recognized by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), but underscored that there would be no need for a tri-partite conference (OIC, MNLF, and Philippine government) if indeed Misuari was unable to assert his leadership over the MNLF, according to Jainal. To facilitate communication between Misuari and his followers on Jolo, Puno offered to have Misuari transferred detention quarters in Zamboanga City, Jainal added.

¶4. (C) Although Misuari promised Puno and Santiago that he would coordinate the cessation of hostilities, he later confided to Jainal that it would be "very difficult" to convince Malik to stop fighting as long as government security forces pursued him with an arrest warrant. Misuari told Jainal that he planned to ask the government to drop the warrant for Malik's arrest.

¶5. (C) Instead, Misuari instructed the MNLF Sulu Revolutionary Command under Khaid Ajibon to capture Dulmatin and Omar Patek, according to Jainal. He added that Misuari hoped personally to turn over the two fugitives to U.S. authorities.

Bail for Misuari?

¶6. (C) During an April 18 hearing in a Makati Regional Trial Court, Judge Winlove Dumayas denied attorney Jainal's motion to dismiss sedition charges against Misuari. However, Jainal noted that Judge Dumayas may decide on May 9 whether to allow the release of Misuari on bail.

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